



# OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

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## HORSES BY THE NUMBERS

170

Horses living in town  
(approximate)

3

Stables in town

35-40

Backyard pastures

400-2,000

Average weight  
of horses in pounds

25-30

Average lifespan  
of a horse

62

Age of oldest horse



## Living with Horses in Los Altos Hills



As you drive around the bucolic, winding roads or hike along the scenic pathways of town, you will frequently come across one of nature's most gentle and noble creatures — the horse. Or perhaps you have visited Westwind Community Barn and sat on a bench to gaze out at dozens of horses peacefully feeding on local grasses on gently sloping hills. The presence of these horses and the trails that they traverse not only help define the town's rural character, but also evoke its unique history, and enhance its natural beauty. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2.]





*This is the first part of a three-part comprehensive story on living with horses in Los Altos Hills.*

### History of Horses in Los Altos Hills

Horses have played a significant role in the founding of Los Altos Hills and the development of the pathway system that connects neighborhoods.

When Los Altos closed five horse stables in close succession in the early 1950s, local horse owners took note and got organized. They spurred on the incorporation of Los Altos Hills in 1956. Supporters of incorporation rode around on horseback to get the petition signed. They wanted to preserve the rural beauty of apricot orchards



and horses, and implemented the one acre lot requirement to help solidify that aim. A pathway system for horse riders and pedestrians was developed to connect neighborhoods together, and local equestrians helped maintain the paths.

In 1971, the Los Altos Hills Horsemen's Association was formed. One of their first projects was to build a community riding ring on Purissima Road (it was rebuilt in 1981 and 2006).

Horses were in backyard pastures all over town; in fact, when it was formed there were more horses than residents in Los Altos Hills. In those early days you could visit friends across town by navigating a network of pasture fences, avoiding the road altogether. Children would ride over to see friends, have an ice cream at Rancho San Antonio, and cross what is now I-280 to visit the saddle shop.

Bullis Elementary school had a hitching post so that kids could tie their horses up while they played. Gunn High School, on the other hand, had an attractive field for a galloping. It was not uncommon to see impromptu horse races along what is now I-280.

Up until the mid-1990s, teenagers could ride horseback through the drive-through of a local fast food restaurant located on El Camino Real. Those looking for more scenic entertainment would wander the local preserves for miles. An equestrian could even ride all the way to the Pacific Ocean, camp with their horse overnight, and return the next day.

Although horse ownership and boarding a horse on a property is not as common as it once was, the threads of this history are still alive in our town. There are still dozens of people keeping their horses in backyard pastures, and the pathways system and access to open space preserves continues. (The town's municipal code stipulates that "the minimum lot area upon which a horse may be kept shall be one acre, and two horses may be kept on such parcel.") The equestrian culture as a whole continues today and the large lots and access to pathways and open space still make it a wonderful place to own and ride horses.

### Owning a Horse

Owning a horse is an amazing and fulfilling hobby, but it is also a significant investment of both time and finances. Pastures and shelters must be constructed and maintained to keep the horses safe. Horses have to be fed at least twice a day and manure must be picked up regularly. As herd animals, horses are sociable and get lonely without companionship; therefore, it is often best to own two horses so they can keep each other company. And like many pets, horses need regular exercise. Moreover, they need regular hoof trims (and often shoes), dental check-ups, and visits from the vet.

Costs of horse ownership vary considerably. Are you boarding your horse at a stable where full care (daily feeding, watering, and manure removal) is provided, and possibly paying for a trainer to keep your horse "tuned up" as well? If so, that can cost \$800 or more per month, depending on the situation. On the other hand, if you decide to keep horses at home and do the work yourself, the cost will run about \$80 to \$300 per month for feed per horse. Note that these are base costs and do not include additional expenses for equipment, regular shoeing, worming, veterinary and dental visits, training, and competition costs.





## *Horses have played a significant role in the founding of Los Altos Hills and the development of the pathway system that connects neighborhoods.*

Sometimes town residents opt to keep their horses at home but hire someone to come over each day to feed and care for the horses, which splits the difference between stabling and home pasture costs.

If you are considering owning a horse, the best way to start is to take some horse riding lessons. This can be done privately or via a local stable such as Westwind Community Barn (contact community services supervisor Sarah Robustelli at 650-947-2518 or [srobustelli@losaltoshills.ca.gov](mailto:srobustelli@losaltoshills.ca.gov)), and for general questions or local opportunities reach out to Los Altos Hills Horsemen's Association (visit [www.lahha.org](http://www.lahha.org)). Many instructors will let you help with the care of the horses as well, and if not, you can always ask local horse owners if they could use a hand. This is a great way to learn what is involved in care and maintenance before taking the plunge and buying your first horse.

The next step is to lease a horse. In a leasing situation, you pay a monthly fee and take on some of the care of the horse. This also provides you with a bit more latitude to ride the horse when you want. When you do buy a horse, it's important to choose one that you feel comfortable and safe with, as being 'overhyped', or mounted on a horse that requires more skill than you have, is never very fun and can be dangerous. Some of the best horse partners may not have supermodel looks, but are willing and capable and able to do all sorts of different activities, letting both the horse and the rider safely learn from each other and enjoy the relationship. Younger horses are often cheaper for a reason — they don't have the years of training and experience to know what is expected of them and how to keep you and themselves safe.

### **Safety Around Horses**

Unlike a dog or most domestic pets, a horse is a very large and powerful creature. While a large dog can weigh 100 pounds, a pony typically weighs 400 to 600 pounds and stands 10-14 hands tall (a hand equals 4 inches). A full grown horse can weigh up to 2,000 pounds and stand 18 hands high. They have enormous power in their muscles. So it is important to understand how to behave around a horse. Unlike dogs and cats, horses are 'flight' animals — that are predisposed to flee when scared. This doesn't mean that they don't bite or kick, but their first instinct is generally to run away. They are also herd animals that feel safest in a

group, so they will generally run together, or to each other if separated. With this in mind, it's important when approaching a horse not to startle or scare it. Approach slowly and talk soothingly and they will generally identify you as a person and not something to fear, though unusual attire (a poncho flapping in the wind, or an unusual bike or stroller) may give them pause. The best thing you can do when encountering horses on the trail is to say hello so that the horse and rider know you are there, and ask the rider for direction. Do keep in mind that horses can kick when scared, so don't run up from behind or surprise them. Often children want to pet passing horses, and usually equestrians are more than happy to oblige, but ask first and be sure to approach the horse as directed by the owner.

### **Raising a Horse**

Individuals who are new to the world of horses often believe that horse ownership is analogous to dog ownership, ie, starting with a puppy. So they think that they should initially purchase a foal, or young horse. Although there are always exceptions, this is generally not a good recipe for success with horses. Raising and training horses is a skill that takes a lot of time to learn, and often individuals who buy a young horse without knowing how to train them, wind up with a sense of frustration and disappointment or worse

— a dangerous and unhappy animal.

Although most people buy horses from breeders, trainers, or other horse owners, every few years someone in Los Altos Hills decides to breed their horse and raise the foal. This is no small endeavor, since it takes 11 months until the foal is born. And it takes three to four years more until the horse is rideable under saddle. In the years before it is ridden, the youngster gets used to being handled, led, and learns basic commands. It is also 'socialized' to get used to new environments and sights. Sometimes you will see a horse being "ponied," or being led by a rider atop another horse. This helps train or exercise multiple horses at a time.

Once under saddle, it is important to build up training slowly so that the horse's confidence can grow as well as their muscling. Their bones are still developing for many years (the maturity age varies by breed), so it is important to limit their work as they develop to prevent future injuries.

*Part two of this story will be published in September. The story will focus on the bond between human and horse and feature several horse owners and their horses.*

*Alisa Bredo is a third generation Los Altos Hills resident. Her grandfather was one of the signers of the Green Sheets. She currently owns four horses that are kept in backyard pastures. Bredo competes in eventing. She and her horses regularly ride the pathways and at the town arena.*





## FROM THE CITY MANAGER

The first few months of 2020 have brought unimaginable challenges to Los Altos Hills and its residents. In response to shelter-in-place orders from both the county and state, which were intended to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Town Hall has been closed to in-person public access.



Carl Cabill

However, essential government functions continue to operate with work being conducted by phone and email. Certain types of permit inspections remain available for work deemed essential by the county health order. Some town planning, building, engineering, and public works staff continue to report to work. Staff are observing health distancing to maintain a safe and healthy working environment in these unprecedented times.

For the duration of the shelter-in-

place order, many town traditions and community-building events, such as the Pathway Run and the Town Picnic have been cancelled.

In April, the City Council held its first all-digital videoconference meeting via the Zoom app. To comply with physical distancing protocol, councilmembers and staff each participated from their own residences while the community was able to watch the meeting as usual over the Granicus live streaming platform. The success of this meeting demonstrated that town business will continue to operate and complete essential government functions. Staff is working diligently to expand the opportunity of hosting digital meetings for other public hearings that occur in the town and especially the Planning Commission.

Although normal schedules have been interrupted, residents can use this opportunity to unplug from technology and take advantage of the town's unique pathway system.

Hiking with family and friends while maintaining a proper social distancing is a great way to enjoy the outdoors while complying with the public health orders. During this time, pathway maps are available for free at Town Hall – please come by and pick one up. Most town open spaces also remain open to the public.

Town Hall remains open to serve the public on a virtual platform. Please refer to the town website for the most up-to-date information on the status of the county health order, available town services, and other useful resources. If you have any special requests or needs, please let town staff know. We will try our best to get answers to your questions and put you in touch with the appropriate service providers. Please call the main line at 650-941-7222. During regular business hours, the phone will be answered by a knowledgeable staff member who will assist you with your inquiry. Please stay healthy and safe.

# TOWN PATHWAYS

A 2019 City Council resolution declares that all new paths shall be constructed and paid for by the town. Paths are part of the town's infrastructure and are already maintained by staff.

In the past, when individual parcels were developed or redeveloped, the cost of paths was borne by the homeowners, who either paid a pathway fee if no path was needed on their property or if construction had to be postponed until adjoining path segments had to be completed. When the path was needed, homeowners constructed the path to established standards at their own expense.

Making construction of paths the responsibility of the town means that costs for additions to the Pathways System will be shared by all residents. The town will also have control over construction methods. Two facets

of pathway construction remain the same:

1. Subdivisions will still be required to install paths along with other aspects of their infrastructure.
2. Pathway easements will still be required on parcels identified on the approved Master Path Plan,

Alisa Bredo, chair of the Pathways Committee, noted, "The Pathways System has always been a vital part of our town, but we had no way of knowing just how integral it would become to our residents' health and well-being due to the Coronavirus shelter-in-place order. Use of the paths has gone up dramatically, and I am grateful to the town staff for having maintained them so well. I hope everyone is able to enjoy them as a bright spot during these tough times."

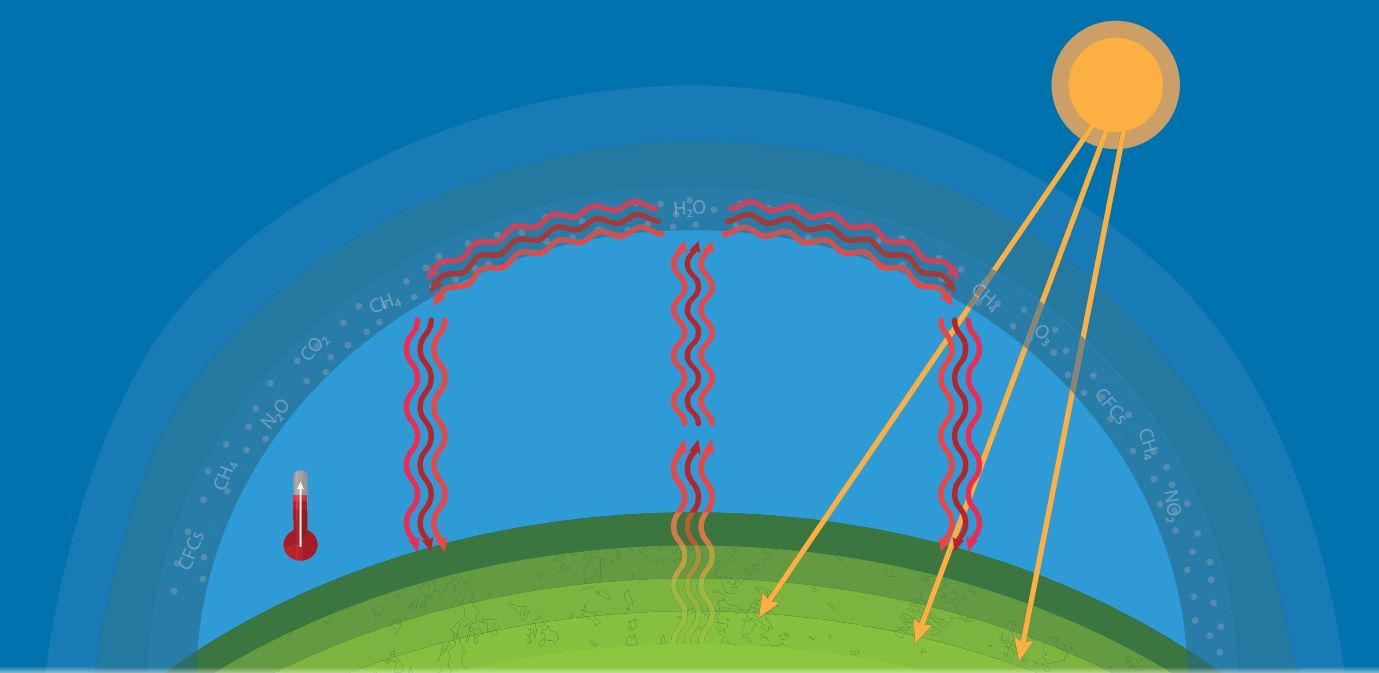


## Town Picnic Cancelled

With heavy hearts, the members of the Community Relations Committee (CRC) announce that the 2020 Town Picnic has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic and the prolonged shelter-in-place orders. This will be the first time in 23 years that the popular event will not take place. Typically, vendor contracts must be signed no later than early April. The uncertainty surrounding measures to contain COVID-19 makes it difficult to line up vendors for such a complex event.

The Town Picnic has grown from humble beginnings as an ice cream social attended by 325 residents to our largest community event of 2,000 attendees. Each year, the CRC starts planning the Town Picnic (held on the first Sunday in June) in January. The CRC is helped by town staff and more than 100 residents who volunteer at the picnic. In addition, 50 classic car owners, 12 paid vendors and 10 staff members work together to make the event fun and memorable.

# HEAT PUMP TECHNOLOGY



California is on an ambitious path to achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045 to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to global warming. Most of our homes use natural gas for space and water heating; however, burning fossil fuels, like natural gas, emits GHGs. Beneficial electrification is the push to replace those gas-burning hot water heaters and furnaces with new ones that utilize heat pump technology.

Heat pump technology is now the standard for energy efficient heating and cooling. Instead of burning gas, heat pumps move heat from one area to another. In a water heater, the heat pump uses heat from the surrounding air to warm the water. The exhaust is cold air that is an added benefit.

We recently replaced both our gas furnace and water heater. The first phase was the water heater. The new Rheem water heater easily fits in the space of the existing water heater. As well as not burning gas, it has some other advantages. First, it's much more efficient — around four times more efficient than a gas water heater. This means it takes a quarter as much energy to heat water. And heat pump water heaters are also smart. Most can be controlled by apps so you can program your water heater to heat only when electricity is cheap, like in the middle of the day when the sun is shining and all the solar farms are filling up the electric grid. The heater is also smart enough to maintain that heat so the water's hot when you want it in the morning. It also detects if there is a leak and will alert you. In



addition, the cold exhaust air is now ducted into the adjacent laundry room to cool it for free during the warmer months. During the winter, the cool air is directed outside.

The next phase was the replacement of an old gas furnace. This was a bit more of a challenge because it's more difficult to find contractors with experience installing heat pump heaters. Like the heat pump water heater, the main benefits of a heat pump furnace are that we reduce our carbon footprint and they are far more efficient. The other advantage is that a heat pump furnace functions as both a heater and an air conditioner. So the heat pump heater also replaced the old air-conditioning system as well. In either mode, it works the same way: it heats and cools by moving heat from one area to another. It is also smart. We set our thermostat to the desired

temperature when we're up in the morning and the system figures out how long it takes to pre-heat so the house is warm when we get up. We also feel it produces a milder, more even heat, because the heating is less intense than a gas heater. We're just as warm but the air coming out of the vents is less intensely hot.

Los Altos Hills, Santa Clara county, and the State are all focusing on replacing gas burning appliances. You'll start seeing rebates to make the switch and more contractors with the experience to perform the work. Silicon Valley Clean Energy has more information and rebate information at [www.svcleanenergy.org/water-heating/](http://www.svcleanenergy.org/water-heating/).




*Lisa and Steve Schmidt have lived in Los Altos Hills since 1992. For the past ten years, they have been dedicated to reducing their own carbon footprint and helping others do the same through their company HEA.com.*



# BIRDS

## IN OUR BACKYARD



**L**ast year, scientists at Cornell University made a startling announcement: the population of birds in North America has declined by nearly 30% since 1970. In other words, there are 3 billion fewer birds than there were 40 years ago. This crisis is widespread across the country, but here in Los Altos Hills we have seen how resilient nature is, and how it can rebound with careful stewardship, restoration, and community support.





Since 2014, local community-based nonprofit Grassroots Ecology has collaborated with the town staff in the environmental stewardship of three Los Altos Hills open space preserves with the goal of increasing native biodiversity to support both healthy human and wildlife ecosystems within our town. With the removal of invasive plants and the revegetation of native species at Byrne Preserve, we have seen the populations of native birds increase dramatically.

In 2016, Grassroots Ecology installed a dozen bird boxes at Byrne Preserve to support and supplement threatened habitat for native cavity nesting birds. These specialized bird boxes are dispersed throughout the preserve and mimic the natural conditions that cavity nesters require to breed and make their nests.



About 36 species of California native birds rely on these natural cavities for habitat, to safely raise their young, and for protection from predators; including western bluebirds, violet-green swallows, oak titmouses, and acorn woodpeckers.

Natural cavities can be found in old, decaying, and dying trees. They can be created through natural means such as fires, the decomposition of dead wood, or by the boring of other critters such as woodpeckers and beetles.

However, due to the constant pressures of development, the needs of public safety, as well as many homeowner's aesthetic preferences, dead trees that would be considered ideal nesting habitat for these species have been removed from our backyards and natural spaces. With the disappearance of their nesting habitats, these once common native birds have started disappearing too.

At Grassroots Ecology we sought to change that.

With the careful installation, management, and monitoring of bird boxes at Byrne Preserve, we have seen the successful return of many native cavity nesters to the preserve and the surrounding communities.

From February through August, Grassroots Ecology staff and volunteers monitor these boxes every 7 to 10 days then clean and sanitize the boxes in

## WHAT YOU NEED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL BIRDER

- Binoculars
- Field guide
- Bird identification app. The Audubon app is one of the easiest birding apps available for beginners. It comes with a handy "Bird ID" tool that helps you identify unknown birds by filling in some categories, such as color and habitat you saw it in, then it will offer the most likely results based on your location.

## BEST SPOTS TO BIRDWATCH

### Byrne Preserve

27210 Altamont Rd, Los Altos Hills

Parking: free street parking

### Pearson-Arastradero Preserve

1530 Arastradero Rd, Palo Alto, CA 94304

Parking on site, but fills up quickly on weekends

between broods. We record and keep track of which native species are using our nest boxes, and nesting activities such as the number of chicks in each nest and their success rates. By doing so, we can ensure that our nest boxes are positively impacting the surrounding ecosystem, and are providing habitat for threatened native bird species.

We are careful to track which species use our boxes, so that we do not inadvertently provide habitat to an invasive nester. For example, house sparrows and western bluebirds are about the same size, and search for spaces with the same size dimensions to make their nests. However, house sparrows were introduced from Europe and are absolutely vicious houseguests. They have been known to kill native adult blue birds and smash their eggs, stealing their nesting sites to use as their own.

Through careful management and maintenance of these bird boxes, we have seen a dramatic increase in native bird species throughout the preserve! This is one example of how thoughtful approaches to conservation and land management can bring more nature back into our communities.

If you're interested in volunteering with Grassroots Ecology or learning more about our work, please visit [www.grassrootsecology.org](http://www.grassrootsecology.org).

*Ethan Rayner is a Certified California Naturalist and Restoration Specialist with Grassroots Ecology*

## DO YOU ENJOY BIRDWATCHING OR WANT TO SEE MORE BIRDS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD?

**Y**ou can easily birdwatch from the comfort of your own backyard. Take a break from working at home to sit outside and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature for a few minutes each day.

Try to keep an observation journal to record all the birds you see and what they're doing. Most birds are highly active during spring as they try to attract mates, build nests, and take care of their young. Through careful observation you may be lucky enough to witness parts of this amazing life cycle.

It can be a challenge to build and properly maintain bird boxes on your property; however, here are a few steps that you can take today to protect and increase the amount of native birds around you:

- Plant native plants that provide habitat (ie, homes and building materials, safe places to forage away from predators) for native birds. Native plants also attract beneficial native insects to your yard and garden, which in turn draws more birds into your backyard.
- Keep cats indoors. Predation by domestic cats is the number-one direct, human-caused threat to birds in America. Outdoor cats kill over 2.4 billion birds each year. A common misconception is that placing a bell on the collar of outdoor cats will keep wildlife safe. Unfortunately, birds do not associate the sound of a bell with predators. As a result, the bell is not effective.



I overheard my teenage son today talking to one of his friends while they played a computer game saying “...that was BC...” He was not referring to the English language expression *Before Christ*, but *Before Coronavirus*. Out-of-the-mouth of babes. Indeed, life BC now seems like a period of innocence. When running to the grocery store to pick up a couple of items on the way home from work or meeting a friend for a coffee required no mental effort or cause for concern. The end to the new ‘normal’ seems nowhere in sight and we are all experiencing a collective mourning for the ‘good old days.’

With Centers for Disease Control reporting the number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths in excess of 73,000 confirmed cases, and 1.3 million confirmed infections (as of this writing), fear on a societal level is real. Testing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been slow, and there is limited accurate data on the true number of infected community cases in the U.S., with estimates in the tens to hundreds of thousands. Desperate times, call for desperate measures, and social distancing and frequent handwashing remain the most effective strategy to curtail the rampant spread of coronavirus.

### New Normal

A survey published by Pew Research reported that 90% of U.S. adults feel like the COVID outbreak has had a profound impact on their personal lives. Close to 200 million people who are living their lives in ways that were unimaginable just a few weeks ago. Our local community is taking the shelter in place order seriously, if the empty streets and occasional outings to the pick up of essentials or a walk around the block are anything to go by. The absence of hugs and handshakes between friends is especially felt by all. Many of us have had to cancel or postpone once-in-a-lifetime trips, weddings, birthday parties, but that all pales into insignificance when you factor in the worry we all have for loved ones or for ourselves. Many that



## Life in the Age OF THE CORONAVIRUS

work in grocery stores or health care are living with enormous anxiety about becoming infected or infecting others. Stories of enforced changes to living arrangements as the risk of infecting family and loved ones becomes a real possibility. Grandparents unable to hold their newborn grandchild or the adult daughter unable to attend her mother’s funeral, strike me as especially sad.

### Mourning Routine

Humans thrive on structure and predictability, and currently everything seems to have no precedent. Our brains prefer to focus on problem solving and not on adjusting to changes to our long established routines. It’s too cognitively demanding, and consequently very stressful. Grocery shopping is now something 42 percent of Americans fear doing due to the possibility of infection. The mundane activity of the grocery run is now fraught with fear, especially if you are older, have limited mobility or are immune compromised. Our community

has banded together, with local highschoolers offering to pick up and deliver groceries to older residents and local stores have responded by offering special shopping hours and free curbside pick up.

### Relationships & Loneliness

Contagion fears have resulted in 48 percent of older Americans are uncomfortable visiting a friend in their home or having a friend visit them, over 90 percent are uncomfortable attending a crowded event, and 77 percent are not willing to eat out at a restaurant. Shelter in place orders have led to extreme loneliness, particularly amongst those living alone, younger, with

pre existing mental conditions and in lower income groups. For many, the loss of social or religious organizations has added to the sense of isolation and loneliness. The local Chambers of Commerce are encouraging residents to continue to support local restaurants by ordering take-out, but the majority of businesses remain closed. Many organizations have started offering virtual gatherings, and mental health professionals are encouraging residents to make plans to speak with friends and family members regularly to diminish any sense of isolation.

### Financial Concerns

With one in three Americans reporting that they either lost their job or someone in their household has, financial hardship as a consequence of the pandemic is a reality. I know of parents worried about their adult children being able to manage since they have lost their job, or asking to return to live at home as they can no longer afford to live independently. For many, loss of employment is more devastating than becoming infected with COVID-19. Loss of income may lead to eviction and even removal of legal permanence, if it was previously supported by a person’s job. For others, businesses that they have spent years building up are in danger of closing or have already closed. Many small business owners have had to furlough or terminate staff that feel like family and have been working for them for years, and feel like family.

### Remote Working & Virtual School

Like many of you, I am working remotely, and my children have been





attending 'virtual school' since early March. Working remotely has now become the norm as a consequence of the virus outbreak for 75 percent of working-age Americans with a postgraduate degree, closely followed by 62 percent of those with a bachelor's degree. For the majority of local residents that are working parents, it means navigating an unprecedented reality — adjusting to working remotely for many for the first time and homeschooling their children. All parents are concerned about supporting their child's learning, yet are very anxious about remaining productive and retaining their jobs. The Family First Covid Response Act (FFCRA) is offering working parents some reassurances, asking employers to be realistic about the amount of work possible while having to provide childcare. Parents are

### Teens and Loss

Many teens are managing an unprecedented time in history, sheltered in place at a time when they are most primed to want to separate and become independent. It is a type of 'arrested development' not of their choosing — cancelled proms, college campus visits, first loves, school trips, even the end of the school year missed good-byes. Teens will likely want to be on their phones or playing virtual computer games with their friends more than ever. Any 'social' exchange and opportunity to be with peers, albeit virtually should be encouraged. Teens need other teens in a way that younger children don't. Local schools are responding with virtual and drive through graduations to help with the 'rights of passage' these events offer.

### Mental Health

A Harris Poll by the University of Phoenix reported 84 percent of Americans are concerned that the ongoing impact of social distancing will have on their mental wellbeing. More than 68 percent of Americans feel like everything is out of their control, and more than 56 percent say they are balancing more now than before the pandemic. The Disaster Distress Helpline at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has seen a 9 fold increase (891 percent) in call volume compared to March 2019. Research is showing the psychological cost of quarantine measures includes confusion, anger, insomnia, anxiety, depression, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress (PTSD). Fear of infection, inadequate information, lack of supplies, stigma, xenophobia and financial loss are strong contributing factors. The reduced social and physical contact, absence of typical routine during shelter in place lead to boredom and a sense of isolation. With evidence emerging that shelter in place measures having long-lasting

effects, including alcohol abuse or dependence and PTSD, even up to three years post quarantine. Length of quarantine and degree of negative psychological impact are strongly correlated. With health experts indicating the situation may continue into Labor Day, the psychological impact will likely worsen. With reports emerging that men and women of Asian descent, especially Chinese experiencing online threats, racist slurs and politicization, the impact of what has been called the "Chinese virus" on our community remains to be seen. For many, anxiety can present in a multitude of ways — disrupted sleep, fatigue, irritability, trouble concentrating, rapid breathing, and in some cases even panic attacks or obsessive thoughts about becoming sick. Having clear and unified messaging from respected officials reduces anxiety, but the understanding of coronavirus is rapidly evolving and we are being flooded with intimidating, contradictory and confusing recommendations on what to do to protect ourselves and our loved ones. Examples of this include statements like "Don't hoard there's no need to panic," quickly followed by "Limit your chances of exposure, shop infrequently" or information that cloth or paper masks don't prevent infections quickly followed by requests to wear masks in public places.

### Summer & Fall Implications

This summer will likely involve many cancelled trips and vacations. For many, visits to extended family and the absence of the routine of school is a welcome change. This summer will likely be different. Many families are already cancelling their vacations or plans to host visiting family and friends.

Pew Research reports that 66 percent of Americans are not comfortable going to a polling station to vote. A concern that will need to be considered by lawmakers if the pandemic continues through our forthcoming November presidential election.

### Coping Strategies

In light of the medical and existential crisis, we are all facing, what can we do to cope with stress and trauma? Many of us are concerned about staying healthy and doing what we can to boost our immune system. There is limited research evidence on the benefits of supplements and vitamins to enhance the immune system. What is known is the negative impact of stress on the immune system, and finding ways to relieve stress are a great way to boost immunity. Exercise lowers the level of cortisol (the stress hormone) in your system, but too much exercise can stress it. Try to focus on a diet filled with vegetables, fruits and foods that support your microbiome (yogurt, sauerkraut and fermented foods).

For many, stockpiling on toilet paper or non-perishable food items can give a sense of control when coping with high levels of anxiety or even panic, but in reality the behaviors have limited use as a coping mechanism.

Self-care should be a priority. Be sure to get enough sleep and virtually connect with friends, family and organizations. Keep stress levels low by exercising, gardening, mindfulness and meditation, and finding things that bring you joy. There are a multitude of free online exercise classes, including yoga. We are fortunate to have at our doorstep beautiful hiking and walking trails for all skills and abilities. Online apps like AllTrails and Strava are great at showing places to hike and walk. Follow the six feet recommended distance and enjoy the beauty outside your door.



Rita Hitching is a local science writer, researcher, and teacher who writes on teen brain development. She aims to help teens understand themselves by using the latest neuroscience data to explain how the teen body and brain develop and publishes the explanations on her website, [teenbrain.info](http://teenbrain.info).

**The end to the new 'normal' seems nowhere in sight and we are all experiencing a collective mourning for the 'good old days.'**

encouraged to not stress about needing to provide enrichment opportunities for kids, and to not be concerned about the increased screen time. There is limited research evidence on the negative impact of screen time on children's development. Our school districts have made a valiant effort to rapidly pivot classroom instruction to full-time remote learning. Children will continue to learn, and for many virtual learning can be very effective. Local highschoolers are offering free online after school classes for K-8 children like stone painting or calligraphy. My 12-year-old daughter attended a class and it was a lot of fun. Consider signing up your child or asking your older child to volunteer to teach an online class.





# Robotic-Assisted SURGERY

In Silicon Valley, everyone understands the importance of technology. People have seen how it can improve all aspects of life, from smartphones and transportation to everyday conveniences they depend on. At El Camino Health, it's only natural that they bring that technology to healthcare — robotic-assisted surgery is one way to do so.





This minimally invasive approach allows surgeons to perform complex procedures through tiny incisions with greater accuracy, which makes all the difference for patients. Smaller incisions mean a safer surgery, less pain and scarring, and a quicker recovery. And, procedures often take significantly less time than other approaches and require a shorter stay in the hospital — sometimes without a hospital stay.

El Camino Health embraces this technology because it improves care for patients.

### What is robotic surgery?

Using a console in the operating room, the surgeon manipulates surgical instruments attached to robotic arms. This allows them to make precise movements with the stability and dexterity beyond what's possible with the human hand.

Advanced equipment such as 3D imaging software lets them see a magnified view of the surgical area on a screen, giving surgeons a variety of tools that let them operate with greater confidence, efficiency and precision.

### Expertise across a range of specialties

El Camino Health's skilled surgeons perform the most robotic-assisted surgeries in the region — more than 11,000 procedures. Surgery volume is important for patients — the higher the volume, the greater the expertise. Patients come to El Camino Health with the confidence that they're in the capable hands of experts.

The hospital has come a long way from first using robotic-assisted surgery in 2006 with one type of system — today, there are four different robotic platforms in use. More than 50 surgeons across a range of specialties — including weight loss, digestive health, gynecology, cancer care, orthopedics, spine and pulmonary care — are certified to use them.

### da Vinci® Xi Surgical System

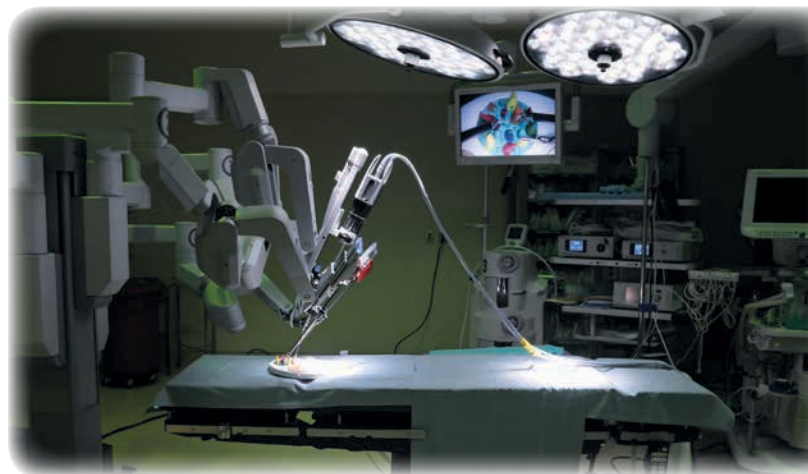
The da Vinci, the hospital's first robotic system, is used to treat bladder and pelvic conditions, prostate and gynecologic cancers, cardiothoracic conditions, hernias, and conditions that affect the colon and pancreas.

It is also used for weight-loss surgeries and El Camino Health's hospitals are one of only two centers of excellence in the area for this procedure. Surgeons can use the system to treat prostate cancer using just five small incisions. And, the system's Single-Site™ instrumentation allows surgeons to remove the gallbladder, without visible scarring, through a single incision in the navel.

As an early adopter in the region, El Camino Health's experience prompted other hospitals to send their surgeons to them for training — a testament to their expertise.

### Robotic-assisted bronchoscopy

Interventional pulmonologists use Ion™ Endoluminal System to take samples (biopsies) of hard-to-reach lung nodules, without surgery. Following an investigative study, El Camino Health was the first in the world to perform the procedure. It uses a small,



flexible tube (catheter) inserted through the mouth. The doctor guides a needle through the tube to get the sample.

Robotic bronchoscopy allows doctors to take tissue samples from a few areas of the nodule, which helps ensure a correct diagnosis. It's more accurate than a conventional needle biopsy and helps prevent the need for repeat biopsies. This procedure lets doctors catch lung cancer early, when it's most treatable.

### Robotic-assisted joint replacement

Orthopedic surgeons use the Mako® Robotic-Arm Assisted Joint Replacement for total knee and hip replacements and partial knee replacements, which are used to treat joint pain caused by arthritis.

The Mako system combines still 3D images taken before surgery with moving images taken during the procedure to show surgeons how the joint moves and artificial joints will fit. Surgeons

can predict how the new joint will affect the tendons and ligaments around the joint and customize the surgery to offer patients the best results. This means surgeons can align the joint more accurately, which results in a more natural-moving joint.

### Navigation guided spine surgery

The Mazor X Stealth™ Edition Robotic Guidance Platform lets surgeons plan and perform spine surgery more accurately. They can create a 3D rendering of the spine before the procedure so

that they can develop a predictable, effective surgical plan based on each person's unique spine.

During the procedure, the technology's 3D imaging shows a magnified view of the spine and the exact placement of surgical instruments or spine implants. The robotic arm holds surgical instrument guides in place, and the technology assists the surgeon to perform the surgery exactly as planned.

### Looking toward a bright future

For more than a decade, El Camino Health has been a leader in robotic-assisted surgery and continually adopts the latest, most promising technologies. It's how the organization fulfills its commitment to providing the highest quality of advanced medicine and personalized care. Find out more about robotic-assisted surgeries at [www.elcaminohealth.org/robotics](http://www.elcaminohealth.org/robotics).





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#### **Town Newsletter Statement of Purpose**

This is the official town newsletter to communicate current issues, services, and activities in Los Altos Hills to the residents of the town — to facilitate, encourage, and improve interaction between the residents and the town government. The newsletter is published quarterly. **Deadline for the next issue is July 6, 2020.**

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[www.losaltoshills.ca.gov](http://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov)

#### **Our Town**

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# HELP DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



**Dial 211** connect to a specialist 24/7 for personalized assistance. Call is free, confidential and offer multiple languages.

**Dial 911** for emergencies.

**Call 408-299-2311** for non-emergency calls to sheriff's office

**Call 650-941-7222** to reach town staff who will do their best to connect you with the available resources including:

- Wellness Calls
- Food Delivery
- Medical Assistance